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DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DYNAMICS OF MIGRATION

Joram Tarusarira

Abstract: A positive response to migration requires a joint effort from both the migrants and citizens of the host countries. Migration, especially forced migration, engenders negative personal and socio-psychological impacts on refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants. The traumatic experiences they encounter on the journey from their homelands to host countries cause helplessness, fear and dependency. On the other hand, citizens of the host countries often have a negative psychological disposition toward migrants. This has been more distinct with the increased flow of migrants and refugees into Europe following conflict, civil wars and economic inertia in Africa and the Middle East. For effective and positive migration governance, citizens of host countries need to transform their negative socio-psychological attitudes and dispositions towards migrants, and the migrants need to restore their confidence as well as increase trust with the host countries to facilitate social cohesion. Thus, both the host country citizens and the refugees require a cognitive, emotional and moral transformation. Support of migrants has mostly focused on how to integrate them into the host countries through social programmes, with less emphasis on the socio-psychological dimension at play involving the migrants themselves and the host country citizens. This article argues that development education, encompassing a philosophy of critical consciousness and transformative learning, is a strategic methodology to facilitate this transformation towards a public understanding of, and positive action on, migrant issues.

Key words: Development Education; Socio-psychological; Psychosocial; Migration Governance; Multiculturalism; Social Cohesion.

Introduction

Conflict, civil wars and economic instability, mostly in Africa and the Middle East, have resulted in the increased flow of forced migrants and refugees into

Europe. Almost a million asylum applications were made in Europe in 2015 compared to 656,000 in 2014 (Parkinson, 2015). Forced migrants often encounter harsh conditions at state level, such as policies that attempt to distinguish between the so-called deserving and undeserving refugees through filtering practices and technologies at border posts and in the country. At the societal level the refugees are met with polar extremes of solidarity and of xenophobia (Zaman, 2017: 157). These experiences not only come with physical limitations but also negative psychological impacts. Thus, the disempowering psychosocial effects of the lived experiences of forced migrants - that is, refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants, whose motives to migrate often comprise a complex mixture of political, environmental and economic factors - requires attention. This article discusses how the harsh conditions which migrants sometimes experience on their journeys or on arrival in host countries, compromise their agency resulting in the development of particular socio-psychological repertoires regarding their hosts. Socio-psychological repertoire refers to thoughts, feelings and behaviours, developed and shared by group members in relation to actual or imagined others (Kelman, 2008; Bar-Tal, 2000). Subsequently, the article proposes development education as a strategy that can be deployed to enhance migrants' agency to facilitate good relations between them and citizens of host countries within the broader scheme of effective migration governance. The article argues that it is not only the forced migrants who need a turnaround of psychosocial dispositions, but also citizens of host countries.

Institutional approach to migration governance

International institutions such as the United Nations General Assembly, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development put states and inter-states discussions and agreements at the centre of migration governance. For instance the United Nations General Assembly defines migration governance as 'the policies and programmes of individual countries, inter-state discussions and agreements, multilateral forums and consultative processes, the activities of international organisations, as well as relevant laws and

norms' (United Nations, 2013). Statist and legal laws and norms are emphasised. Inter-group relations between migrants and citizens of host countries are not prioritised as central for effective migration governance (Lukunka, 2011; Montgomery, 1996). Research on refugee lives has traditionally focused on hunger, shelter, and job security at the expense of the (socio-) psychological, cultural, and communal aspects of well-being (Lukunka, 2011). Yet psychological well-being, as Montgomery notes, determines refugee adaptability to new environments (Montgomery, 1996). Forced migrants often experience great trauma and socio-psychological strain due to the long journeys they often face, and from their encounters with citizens of host countries. On the other hand, citizens of host countries have particular socio-psychological dispositions based on problems that refugees are seen to pose for their host. This results in a deterioration of refugee-host relations or anti-refugee sentiments (Lawrie & van Damme, 2003). This is evidenced by comments which have become commonplace in current debates on migration governance worldwide, that migrants take locals' jobs and put pressure on public services (Chomsky, 2007).

For effective and positive migration governance, on the one hand, citizens and governments of host countries need to transform their attitudes towards, and perceptions of, migrants. On the other, migrants need to have their confidence restored so that they can assume greater control of their new situation. Much of the work with migrants, outside the political and legal processes, has been unidirectional, focusing on how to integrate them in the host countries through social programmes (Lant, 2017). There has been less focus on the socio-psychological dimension at play involving the migrants themselves and the host country citizens. A socio-psychological approach brings all stakeholders into critical engagement with each other. Development education's philosophy of critical consciousness together with the concept of transformative learning, is a strategic methodology to facilitate this transformation towards a public understanding of, and positive action on, migration governance (Freire, 2002; Cranton, 2005; Mezirow, 2002).

Trust and migration governance

The current refugee ‘crisis’ in Europe, the largest since World War Two, has resulted in greater regulation of migration and enhanced security (Falk, 2017). The United States’ (US) ban on the immigration of citizens—subsequently overturned in the courts—from seven majority Muslim countries, namely Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and Libya, by executive order by the 45th President of the US, Donald Trump, on 27 January 2017, is a case in point (The White House, 2017). Such developments have resulted in a growing belief that inward migration has divided rather than united societies, and in some cases, has become a security threat. The recent terrorist attacks and the continuing threats to Western countries by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) seemingly justify questioning whether it still makes sense to remain hospitable as well as to trust migrants and refugees.

Social cohesion and effective governance is based on some form of societal trust. In this context forced migrants, the state and the citizens need to trust each other, because low trust societies may struggle to cooperate, which impedes mutual understanding. In such societies, neighbours, most often migrants, might be seen as a threat to the existing socio-economic and political systems. Trust, however, has to be facilitated. One way to do this is to increase contact between different communities through cross-community work. Cross-community outreach programmes, which encourage inter-communal dialogue and enhance cultural understanding, cultivate great respect, diminish fears and unite communities in a mutual acceptance of their common humanity (Hudson et al., 2007; Kidwai, Moore and FitzGibbon, 2014). Social trust, that is, the belief in the goodness or good intentions of others that they will not willingly or unwillingly cause any harm, is a key pillar towards empowering ‘the other’. Embedded in social trust is confidence in the good intentions of ‘the other’. Confidence in other people enables free engagement without fear or reservation. This implies on the one hand the expectation that one’s views or actions will be objectively considered and, on the other hand, the belief that they will receive the same in return—in short, civility and reciprocity. Trust can be primary (taken for

granted and unquestioned), or reflective and calculating. The former does not search for evidence of trustworthiness (e.g. trust in God) while the latter is conceptualised and rationalised, and progressively transformed into strategic and calculated forms (Marková, Linell and Gillespie, 2007: 19). We are interested in the latter type; trust as confidence in human qualities in role expectation and not faith, which is divinely, sanctioned confidence (Herbert, 2004: 87). This means reflective or calculative trust can be thought about, cultivated, facilitated, and is symbolically communicable. It is implicitly or explicitly present in interactions, relationships, and communication (Marková, Linell and Gillespie, 2007: 19). It grows gradually and is mediated by patience and time (Stevens, 2004: 135).

Associating with the 'other' facilitates social connections and cooperation, and by virtue of repeated interactions engenders trust among members (Anheier and Kendall, 2000: 11). Increased contact or associational life through various social programmes and activities has the potential to open up to the other and get to know them better, that is, knowing who they are, what their joys and worries are, what they believe in, how they give meaning to life cognitively, emotionally and morally. Thus, this trust is not baseless, unfounded or blind. As Parlevliet observes, associational life addresses relationships which are vital to unlocking positions of fear and suspicion which block systemic changes; it enhances participation by bringing communities together, and if institutionalised, formulates proposals for action in situations where there is tension and suspicion (Parlevliet, 2001: 2).

Increased contact, while it is not in itself a panacea, helps to deconstruct stereotypes about 'the other'. Stereotypes are often applied to entire groups and identities. They are an inference drawn from the assignment of a person to a particular category; for instance the actions of one Muslim or Christian can be ascribed to all Muslims or Christians and vice-versa. This can serve an ideological function, which justifies the status quo or interests of the dominant or powerful (Brown, 2010: 72). Grouping people into one group overlooks that people have individual identities. Consequently, the potential for good or bad is deposited in a group. Thus to

be good or bad becomes contingent on the group one belongs to and not on his or her actions. Once a stereotype is formed, engagement with the person or people to whom it is ascribed will often be biased and/or prejudiced. The engagement will not interrogate and challenge axiomatic and normative claims. Stereotypes may, however, change in response to the disconfirming information (Brown, 2010: 105).

The desire to understand and recognise the other is strategically positioned to encourage refugees and migrants to engage with the values and culture of the host countries as well as to respect them. This guards against the creation of suburbs, such as the areas around Paris, where young migrants are isolated from the rest of society. More importantly this leads to recognition of the ‘other’, a move away from conceiving historically defined or inherited hierarchies as the sole provenance of social status, toward a notion of dignity more congruent with the ideals of a democratic society or polity, one that is more likely to confer political equality and a full or unimpaired civic status upon all its citizens (Taylor, 1994). This resonates with Butler’s interest in considering how existing norms allocate recognition differentially and what might be done to shift the very terms of recognisability in order to produce more radically democratic results (Butler, 2009: 6).

To make borders between people permeable, shared and complementary by stressing their reciprocal enrichment and the humanity of all, requires exposure to the ‘unknown’ other, and the challenging of myths and unfounded stories. This will allow the shedding of new light on both groups and the transformation of stereotypes (Bar-Tal and Teichmann, 2005). This process will transform culturally exclusive boxes and compartments and build bridges across different sections of society. Such a process has the potential to reverse negative socio-psychological attitudes and perceptions at both individual and community levels.

Negative socio-psychological repertoires and the imperative for change

The negative socio-psychological repertoires between migrants and some citizens of host countries, especially those who feel their socio-economic and political security is threatened, could be unlocked through psychosocial methods. Unlocking negative socio-psychological attitudes and perceptions paves the way for trust. At the heart of the socio-psychological method is dialogue and reflexivity, which facilitate interpersonal engagement and an inner dialogue respectively. Reflexivity challenges migrants and the host citizens to have a nuanced conception of themselves and the other. As migrants enter a new country their identity qualitatively changes and this often requires a deconstruction and reconstruction of new identities. This process requires internal examination leading to external dialogue with citizens of the host countries and policy makers. One of the major obstacles to adapting to new environments is the lack of an internal reflexivity. The temptation is to externalise and project all the difficulties onto the 'other', thus stifling internal communication channels that suggest an internal variability or disharmony (Bar-On, 2006). Effective integration in a new environment consists of change of motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes and emotions; in short, psychological changes. Psychological changes can take place through information processing, unfreezing, persuading, learning, reframing, recategorising and forming of new psychological repertoires (Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004: 15).

To settle well in a new country, migrants require a form of reconciliation with themselves, and with the new community. The host country citizens also need to come to terms with the phenomenon of large numbers of new arrivals with different cultures sometimes negatively stereotyped. As Clegg notes, reconciliation with oneself and with others (in this case migrants and host citizens and vice-versa) is the highest aspiration of the human need for identity, belonging and community. It is expressed in holistic patterns of relating, that is: a) responding without resort to physical, verbal, or emotional violence; b) letting go of prejudiced or bigoted attitudes and beliefs; c) mitigating the divisive effects of core

beliefs which cannot be surrendered; d) recognising differences and seeking or creating common ground; e) dialoguing with the expectation of changing and being changed by others; f) promoting inclusive processes, language and participation; g) respecting self, others, and the natural world; h) challenging injustice and other destructive patterns of relating, dealing fairly with all; and i) reflecting critically on one's own and one's community's behaviour and calling to account oneself, one's community and others (Clegg, 2008).

Critical consciousness, a key element of development education, possesses the capacity to unlocking cognitive, emotional and moral perceptions. It allows people to analyse, pose questions, and take action on social, political, cultural and economic factors that influence and shape their lives. As Giroux asserts, critical consciousness is situated in a critical perspective that stresses the transformation of relations between the dominated and the dominant within the boundaries of specific historical contexts and concrete cultural settings (Giroux, 1983: 227). With reference to forced migration, it stresses the transformation of relations between migrants and citizens of host countries, with the latter being the dominant and the former being the dominated. Critical reflection on negative socio-psychological attitudes and perceptions will lead to critical action that develops a positive socio-psychological repertoire necessary for social cohesion. The role of the development educator is 'to enter into dialogue with the people around themes that speak to the concrete situations and lived experiences that inform their daily lives' (Giroux, 1983: 227). Transformative learning is conscientisation or consciousness raising, which aims to develop critical consciousness among individuals and groups (Mulura, 2005: 157; Freire, 2002).

Development education and transformative learning

Forced migration creates a people with particular frames of reality and the world. These frames are created by the experience of the traumatic journey and the visions and illusions of the citizens of host countries, of which the latter have their own perception of migrants. However, most of the frames of

both migrants and citizens of host countries are facile and uncritically acquired but cannot be changed overnight. Transformative learning becomes a strategy to facilitate the required change because it is a process where previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable and better validated. It is a structural reimagination, reinterpreting and reorganisation of the way a person looks at him/herself. It is the process by which people transform their taken for granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive (Cranton, 2005; Mezirow, 2002).

Development education methodologies such as Training for Transformation (TfT) developed by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel (1984) can facilitate transformative learning and the development of critical consciousness because they go beyond technical knowledge and skills. They address both societal and personal feelings and needs. They employ participatory learning to encourage communities to start reflecting on their own experiences, critically reflect on their lives and analyse together the issues in question. Participants identify viable strategies to improve the situations they see as problems in their lives. The tools include small group discussions, brainstorming, role-plays and illustrations, listening and drawings. The methods and the materials are designed to stimulate interest, emotion and debate, including simulations, real life stories, newspaper articles, poetry and drama to broach issues which are discussed freely as well as those that are not (Leupold, 2004). These methods are problem-posing with the intention to spark reflection rather than pre-determined outcomes that are absolute and deterministic.

Problem-posing approaches are contrasted to ‘banking’ methods of education, where the teacher’s role is that of putting deposits of knowledge into the students’ heads (Freire, 2002). In the banking method, the students are supposed to give the ‘right answers’ in periodical criterion referenced tests (Peterson, 2003). The banking method in the case of migration would mean prescribing deterministic and teleological frameworks on how migrants should be treated without engaging them. This approach eschews engaging

all the stakeholders necessary for debate towards effective governance. The alternative approach proposed by Freire (2002) is a dialogical ‘problem-posing’ approach, whereby a number of parties, in this case facilitators, migrants, host country citizens and policy makers, discursively and hermeneutically engage in order to arrive at a mutual view of the world. Through the use of open-ended questions, the participants are encouraged to engage in critical thinking and begin to question the very foundation of their beliefs, attitudes and emotions. In the case of migrants and citizens of the host countries participatory methodologies would be positioned to facilitate reflection on forced migration experiences and (socio-) psychological attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes held by both parties. The process of raising the critical consciousness of migrants, policy-makers and citizens of host countries needs to be gendered. Thus, it is vital to take into consideration the learning needs of women, who are among the most affected by forced migration. To this end, in development education, Stalker (2005) recommends paying attention to ‘women’s learning’ understood as the understandings, knowledge and skills acquired by women.

Application to migration context

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in development education can facilitate socio-psychological transformation by bringing together migrants, policy-makers and citizens of host countries in workshops and face-to-face meetings. In addition to meetings and workshops, collaborative activities between migrants and citizens of host countries can facilitate a change of negative or suspicious socio-psychological dispositions. Collaborative activities may create interdependence and foster common goals. Thus citizens of host countries and migrant communities can learn more about each other (Bar-Tal and Teichman, 2005). As aforementioned, exposure to disconfirming information is another way to deal with negative socio-psychological attitudes and perceptions. Uncritically received information is subjected to interrogation and scrutiny during joint activities. Meetings and workshops can take the form of cultural activities between citizens of host countries and migrant communities. Cultural activities allow

for learning about the other from a human cultural perspective. ‘The other’ is presented in a humane way with his or her needs, aspirations and concerns.

Such activities should not be an end in themselves, but should be understood as codes or problem-posing materials that open the way for exchange and analysis that facilitate transformative learning. Framed within the context of development education and psychosocial methods, exhibitions or any other form of artistic and cultural expression become instrumental in facilitating discussion and dialogue. Since cultural expressions express the needs, aspirations and concerns of parties involved, they form what Freire (2002: 96) calls generative themes, which are defined as ‘the representation in language, of human visions, feelings, and attitudes toward reality. Themes are expressions of that reality. Themes have objective as well as subjective components since language and thought are always referred to reality’ (Garcia, 1974: 125). Such themes act as generators, giving energy and focus to discussions for both the participants and the facilitators. Freire believed that educators must listen to and ‘respect the particular view of the world held by students or participants or learners’ (Freire, 2002: 95). Thus, NGOs and facilitators must enter the ‘thematic universe’—the complex of their ‘generative themes’ of the migrant communities and citizens of host countries. Generative themes are a means to connect participants’ personal experience to larger socio-economic and political patterns in society and the world in general. If a generative theme can be identified in their experiences, the theme will open up the situation for further thinking, investigation, and even collective action. Freire argues that ‘generative themes’ arise in situations that have become limited through socially- and economically-oppressive practices. He identifies ‘limit situations’ as the constellation of boundaries that constrain actions and thoughts and so prevent oppressed people from thinking and acting freely (Gillespie, n.d.). The situation of being a forced migrant with its negative impact is a limit situation, just as the situation of encountering a new people with a different culture is for the citizens of host countries. Generative themes have to do with issues about which people have strong feelings. They generate other themes and can generate new tasks, as well as actions. They are linked to emotions and thus

have the capacity to generate energy to engage and through engagement they increase understanding of the other. As Freire stated: 'The more active an attitude men and women take in regard to the exploration of their thematic, the more they deepen their critical awareness of reality and, in spelling out those thematic, take possession of that reality' (2002: 78).

Conclusion

Effective migration governance is thus not a preserve of states and inter-states policies and agreements. The people affected have a role to play in the success or failure of the policies and agreements. Political processes that are not founded on or mediated by societal involvement are liable to failure. Poorly managed migration governance can be explosive. It can lead to harm, danger and insecurity such as social unrest, xenophobia and discrimination. To avoid such eventualities a socio-psychological perspective is imperative to facilitate change of attitudes between various stakeholders in migration governance including the migrants, state and non-state actors, individuals and the society at large. As has been demonstrated, transformation of perception and attitudes requires facilitation and it has been argued that development education, especially its emphasis on critical consciousness and transformative learning stand well-positioned for this task.

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